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DE RUCNDT #2189 3311531
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 271531Z NOV 06
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0821
INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2398

UNCLAS USUN NEW YORK 002189

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [EFIN](#) [KUNR](#) [ECOSOC](#)

SUBJECT: UNGA RESOLUTION ON STRENGTHENING ECOSOC ADOPTED;
NEXT STEPS EXPLAINED

REF: STATE 188915

¶1. Meeting in plenary session November 20, the General Assembly adopted draft resolution A/61/L.24, entitled "Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council." The Secretariat read a carefully worded statement regarding

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ECOSOC's entitlement to hold meetings as a charter body. It noted that through careful planning of meetings, the new resolution had minimal program budget implications (PBI). It drew attention to the need for careful planning and close coordination between the ECOSOC Secretariat and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. Most delegations that chose to speak expressed a sense of relief after 11 months of negotiations and professed determination to ensure that ECOSOC more effectively manage its responsibilities.

¶2. As with the development resolution adopted last summer (60/265), the final compromise was brokered by the U.S. with textual suggestions that bridged the gap between G-77 and developed country positions. GA President Khalifa called in Ambassador Miller to express her gratitude at the positive U.S. role in helping the GA get to consensus on a resolution that had taken on symbolic meaning far beyond its actual provisions.

¶3. Text of US statement (read after adoption):

While the Economic and Social Council, as a Charter body, is entitled to convene meetings as and when needed, the United States believes that it is important to stress that the Council should also ensure the efficient use of its session time, while working to fulfill its mandates effectively.

Our support for this resolution is thus contingent upon our understanding that the resolution before us has no financial implications. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management must be accorded flexibility and time for adequate planning in order to ensure that it can utilize existing resources, as noted in the Secretariat's statement.

My delegation also would like to emphasize that the resolution does not specify the number or frequency of meetings that should occur, nor request any additional meetings.

Next Steps

¶4. In a hastily scheduled informal meeting November 22, ECOSOC President Hachani described the program of work through the end of 2006. He proposed holding a formal meeting on November 30 and completing ECOSOC's remaining 2006 work in a Resumed Session in the December 11-15 period. He

argued that decisions on the theme for the 2007 Annual Ministerial Review and the Coordination Segment theme needed to be made by November 30 for planning to proceed. He proposed to launch a series of informal consultations chaired by ECOSOC Vice Presidents in the coming days in order to get agreement on these and other issues ahead of the November 30 formal meeting. Delegations resisted this proposal, especially the G77 and EU, noting the press of work in the UNGA Second Committee made this timeline impractical. When pressed further, the Secretariat was unable to make a convincing case for this (new) November 30 deadline, so President Hachani reluctantly agreed that he would launch informal consultations and hold a November 30 formal meeting only if delegations had reached agreement by then. Otherwise, urgent action items would be handled in the December ECOSOC meetings.

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